

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3369
ANSWERED ON:18.08.2003
BAN ON MINING IN SAFETY ZONE
NARESH KUMAR PUGLIA

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government had cleared the project of Durgapur open cast mines of Western Coalfields Limited (WCL) in 1977-78 after allotting 338.85 hectares of forest land and directing WCL to spare 125.5 hectares of the allotted land as safety zone;
- (b) if so, whether the WCL started mining work on the banned areas of 125.5 hectares and reduced it to 7.5 hectares as safety zone;
- (c) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;
- (d) whether WCL has submitted a revised proposal to the Conservator of Forests during 1999-2000 and if so, the details thereof;
- (e) whether the Government have agreed to the revised proposal to WCL and if so, the details thereof; and
- (f) if not, the action taken against the erring officials of WCL for continuing mining activities on the banned areas of the safety zone?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JU DEV)

(a)to(c) Approximately 1177.34 hectares of private, revenue and forest land was acquired under Coal Bearing (Acquisition and Development) Act, 1957 by the Government of India in 1979. Nearly 338.85 hectares of forest land was a part of this area. Out of 338.85 hectares of forest land, 40.47 hectares was handed over to the Western Coalfields Limited (WCL) on 23-05-1980 i.e. before the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 came into operation. Further, the Government of Maharashtra, in 1981, handed over the remaining 298.38 hectares of forest land to WCL. The Ministry of Environment and Forests, in 1989, informed the Ministry of Coal that the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 was attracted and prior permission of the Central Government was necessary in this case. The Ministry of Environment and Forests, in 1991, also clarified that the forest area required for safety zone should not form part of the area proposed for diversion.

(d)to(f) Accordingly, a proposal was submitted by the State Government to the Ministry of Environment and Forests in 2001 for diversion of 172.54 hectares of forest land in favour of WCL for extraction of coal from Durgapur Open Cast Project. After detailed discussion on the issue, the Ministry of Environment and Forests, while taking a holistic view of the background and nature of public utility involved in the proposal, approved it in 2002 with imposition of penal Compensatory Afforestation in view of the violation of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.